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THE TEACHING OF GERMAN IN GERMAN MIDDLE- CLASS SCHOOLS — GYMNASIUMS, REALGYMNA- SIUMS, AND OBERREALSCHULEN

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After religion and history, the government regulations of 1901 have made German the most important subject in the elementary, as well as in the higher schools of Germany. Indeed, from a purely educational point of view, German takes precedence over all other subjects; for it involves not only instruction in German grammar and literature, but also the inculcation of patriotism, the development in German youth of pride in nationality. The task intrusted to the teacher of the mother-tongue is thus a difficult one, and can be accomplished only by men who combine a knowledge of German philology with a sense for style in the use of the living speech, and who possess a contagious enthusiasm for Germany and her men of genius.

The course in German begins with a study of grammar, which aims both at correctness and a knowledge of idiom, and the establishment of critical standards in matters of style. All instruction in grammar is based upon and seeks to enlarge the pupil's already acquired fund of knowledge, the method generally used in imparting a foreign language being forbidden by order of the government. The stylistic exercises, on the other hand, are at first limited to the analysis and reproduction, or imitation of models. These are gradually supplemented by themes assigned or chosen under the supervision of the teacher. The greatest care is taken to avoid the distressing waste that invariably attends the use of themes beyond the pupil's years. In the lower grades subjects are usually sought in the simple incidents of everyday life; in the higher grades the pupil's attention is directed to public questions of general interest, and translations from foreign languages are admitted. The month or

six weeks, which is the time allowed for the preparation of the theme, is used to discipline the pupil by means of dictations and exercises in grammar. Especial emphasis is placed upon the value of simplicity and clearness, and, with an eye to their acquisition, the pupil is encouraged to use the short sentence in preference to the long, involved periods of the ancients, and the German word rather than the word of foreign origin. Indeed, the slogan of the German Linguistical Society is continually dinned into his ears: "Jedwedem Fremdwort Fehde: Deutsche sei des Deutschen Rede!" ("Down with all foreign words: Let German be the German's tongue!") And it should be added that the efforts of the teacher of German are forwarded by the teachers in all other departments, including those of science and mathematics: all members of the faculty incite their pupils to express themselves with all possible correctness, clearness, and elegance, and the style of a report or an examination paper weighs largely in determining the mark.

But the study of grammar and composition is only a part of the training in the mother-tongue. Particular attention is paid to the pupil's oral expression, and here the influence of the teacher's example cannot be overestimated. The careless speaker, the one who cannot break himself of the use of his provincial dialect, works havoc with the speech of his pupils. Especially in the reading and recitation of poems and prose masterpieces is any tendency to negligence in this regard sure to have serious consequences. The *b*, *d*, and *g* for *p*, *t*, and *k* of the Saxon, with his *Baba* instead of *Papa*, his *Budder* instead of *Butter*, and his *Gäse* instead of *Käse*; the Berliner's *j* for *g*, as in *Jott* for *Gott*, or his *ä* for *er*, as in *heruntä* for *herunter*; the *Gläss* for *Gläss*, and *Höff* for *Höff*, of the Hanoverian, etc., etc., may make or mar the best work of Goethe or Heine. And upon the teacher, too, depends the worth of these exercises to the pupil. The number and kind of pieces that are chosen, the intelligence with which the pupil perceives and grasps their meaning, the pupil's appreciation of the beauty, dignity, and grandeur of the compositions—all these things rest with the wisdom and cultivation of the teacher. Happily, there is no failure to recognize the weight of this responsibility. Only those masterpieces whose excellence is beyond dispute are admitted into the schools, and that the study and

interpretation of them may not be perverted to false uses, the grammatical and linguistic analysis of these "gems" is strictly forbidden. The teacher begins by reading the poem or piece of prose without previous explanation or comment, trusting solely to his manner of reading if for the effect he wishes it to produce. Then follow the interpretation of difficult passages, and the explanation of unfamiliar words, together with a critical appreciation of the piece as a whole and in its parts; and after a second reading by the teacher the pupils are required to learn it by heart.

The reading of entire plays in class, either in sequence or by assigning the various parts to individuals, is not in favor. Selected scenes are so used, but, for the rest, the teacher, after indicating the plot and the structural devices employed by the dramatist, assigns the play to his pupils for home reading. And this home reading becomes the basis for the final division of the course. The play supplies the themes for the weekly speeches, or brief orations, which the pupils in the upper grades are required to deliver before the members of their class, who get their first training in public speaking and in forensics in the open discussion which always follows the set address. In the course of time this practice is supplemented by impromptu talks on themes set by the teacher, with the result that most pupils learn to express themselves in public with ease.

An introductory course in logic, a sort of philosophical propædeutics, has been added to the work of the upper first grade in some schools; but this, however desirable it may be, continues to be excluded from the realgymnasiums by the already too complex curriculum.

I append an outline of the course of study:

SEXTA—SIXTH GRADE

(Age of pupils, ten years. Hours per week, four to six—four in the gymnasium, five in the realgymnasium, six in the reform school.)

Grammar.—The parts of speech, declensions, and conjugations. Strong and weak forms. The simple sentence, its structure and punctuation. Exercises in orthography by means of weekly dictation. Reading of poems, and prose tales—legends, fables, stories, and tales drawn from the history and traditions of the fatherland, and illustrated with maps and pictures. Oral reproduction of talks by the teacher, or of passages read aloud from the standard reader. The memorizing and recitation of poems.

QUINTA—FIFTH GRADE

(Hours per week, three to five.)

Grammar.—The simple sentence continued. Fundamental facts concerning the complex sentence and its punctuation. The significance and uses of punctuation explained. Weekly exercises in punctuation and orthography from dictation. Reading and oral reproduction as in Sexta.

QUARTA—FOURTH GRADE

(Hours per week, three to five.)

Grammar.—The complex sentence and its punctuation concluded. Fundamental facts concerning the formation of words. Exercises in orthography, and written reproductions of talks by the teacher, or of passages read aloud. Monthly themes for home preparation. Reading of poems and prose tales, with special attention to themes drawn from Roman and Greek history. Recitation of poems, and oral reproduction of talks by the teacher.

UNTER TERTIA—LOWER THIRD GRADE

Grammar.—Comprehensive review of work done in the three lower grades, with special attention to the changes and irregularities in the elements and forms of language. Monthly themes—narratives, simple descriptions, sometimes submitted in the form of a letter. Occasional themes written in class. Reading of poems and prose tales, with special attention to themes drawn from the German folk-epics, the myths and legends of the Northland, universal history, the history of civilization, geography, natural history. Study of the lives of the poets, and of the forms of poetry so far as required for the appreciation of the poems read. Memorizing and recitation, as in the lower grades.

OBER TERTIA—UPPER THIRD GRADE

Grammar.—The formation of words, with special attention to the changes of vowels and flexional endings. The significance of derivative prefixes and suffixes. Compound words. Themes as in Unter-Tertia, together with reports on assigned reading. Reading of lyric and dramatic poetry, with special attention to the ballads of Schiller, Uhland; Körner's *Zriny*; Uhland's *Duke Ernest of Suabia*; Heyse's *Kolberg*; etc. In schools where Greek is taught, translations of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Lives of the poets, and study of the forms of poetry, as in Unter Tertia. Memorizing and recitation.

UNTER SECUNDA—LOWER SECOND GRADE

(Hours per week, three to four.)

The preparation of themes—gathering of material, drawing of outlines, etc., etc. Reading of poems and prose tales, with special attention to the wars for liberty, Schiller's "Song of the Bell," historical dramas, e. g., *The Maid of Orleans* and *William Tell*, and essays and poems contained in the standard reader. Memorizing and recitation of passages from the dramas read, together with brief orations on themes taken from these dramas, and brief extemporaneous orations on similar themes assigned by the teacher.

OBER SECUNDA—OBER PRIMA—UPPER SECOND—UPPER FIRST

Themes written at home and in class—about eight a year. Reading of passages from the *Song of the Nibelungen*, from *Gudrun*, and the songs of *Walter von der Vogelweide* in the original, or in a modernized version. Simple lectures on the Teutonic world-myths, the Norse myths being considered only so far as necessary to the comprehension of the German myths proper. The court epics, *Percival*, and the court lyrics. A survey of the principal facts in the history of the German language. Specimens of the more important authors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; Klopstock, his life and place in German literature, with specimen odes and characteristic passages from the *Messiah*; Lessing, his life and more important works, his dramas, and excerpts from his prose essays, especially the *Laokoon* and *Hamburgian Dramaturgy*; Goethe, his life and more important works, review of such of his poems as have been read in the lower grades, intensive study of his *Herman and Dorothea*, *Goetz von Berlichingen*, *Egmont*, *Iphigenia*, and, if time permits, of *Tasso*, together with important passages from his prose works, especially from *Truth and Fiction*; Schiller, his life and more important works, together with a brief examination of the productions of his youth, and an intensive study of his historical and philosophical poems, especially the "Walk" ("Spaziergang"), and selected passages from the *Thirty Years' War* and the *Revolt of the Netherlands*; Kleist, his life and more important works, an intensive reading of his *Prinz von Hamburg*, together with a brief survey of the history of the Romantic school. Herder and Wieland are briefly considered in the study of Goethe, and Grillparzer's *Sappho*, or his *Golden Fleece*, is sometimes read. In addition to the specimens of modern writers included in the standard reader, Shakespeare is read in translation in schools where English is not taught, and in the Oberrealschulen, the Greek dramatists, likewise in translation. The metrical systems of the Germans, on the one hand, and of the Greeks and Romans, on the other, compared. Specimens of prose dealing with themes from history, literature, art, and philosophy, selected from the standard reader provided for the upper grades.